



WHOLE HEALTH NEWSLETTER

VA



U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs
North Florida / South Georgia Veterans Health System

Winter 2020/2021 Vol. 1, edition 2

Live Whole Health

Lost

by David Wagoner

Stand still. The trees ahead and
bushes beside you are not lost.

Wherever you are is called here,
and you must treat it as a
powerful stranger,

Must ask permission to know it
and be known.

The forest breathes. Listen.
It answers,

I have made this place
around you.

If you leave it, you may come
back again, saying here.

No two trees are the same
to raven.

No two branches are the same
to wren.

If what a tree or a bush does is
lost on you,

You are surely lost. Stand still.

The forest knows
Where you are. You must let it
find you.



Message from the Whole Health Program Manager, Laurie Reisman, LCSW.

This past
spring
and
summer

have brought forth some of the most challenging times in the history of the United States in terms of learning how to cope and live in unprecedented situations. Many people were psychologically paralyzed, in a state of panic, fear, and anxiety. During the times of isolation, I became more connected to my heart and my higher self to explore what was really important to me. I saw and heard of many loved ones of friends passing away from the virus. I remembered the importance of repairing relationships and expressing my love and caring for people that I might have previously taken for granted. Life suddenly seemed precious and fragile. Through the fear, I connected deeper to my heart, which began to open and soften to the needs of people around me. The places in which I was short sided and holding grudges really seemed unimportant. Creat-

ing peace, speaking my truth, empathic listening and connection have always been important to me, however, the importance of this was magnified during this time. I discovered amidst the chaos and fear that there are so many things that I am grateful for. According to Thompson, J (March 29, 2020), Resilience and Gratitude, Psychology Today, "Gratitude is a state of mind — in fact, there's a gratitude circuit in your brain, badly in need of a workout ... Strengthening that circuit brings the power to elevate your physical and mental health, boost happiness, improve sleep, and help you feel more connected to other people." Utilizing gratitude practice, I realized that so many things that I've taken for granted such as toilet paper, a trip to the market, or stopping by a friend's home are actually precious and important aspects of life. COVID-19 magnified the importance of something as simple and automatic as breathing, which is our most precious commodity. Through

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these experiences and realizations, I decided to re-commit myself to the service of humanity. There is no better way than through the VA and the Whole Health initiative. This heartfelt commitment is the spirit that all of the Whole Health coaches embody. We are here to serve you. Whole Health Coaches can be accessed virtually and in person, through your Patient Aligned Care Teams (PACT) and Community Based Outpatient Clinics (CBOCs).

"The greatest hazard of all, losing the self, can occur very quietly in the world, as if it were nothing at all. No other loss can occur so quietly; any other loss – an arm, a leg, five dollars, a wife, etc. – is sure to be noticed."

– Søren Kierkegaard



VETERAN SUCCESS STORY

USN DISABLED VETERAN HONOR PARRISH

Grateful that I made the decision to commit to the 10-week course of VA Whole Health. During the course, there were some difficult situations that I endured and by being a part of this course, having the support made a huge difference.

The helpful tools that were shared, I implemented them into my daily routine. Definitely enjoyed the opportunities to share :) Sept. 2020

Post VA Whole Health and using the tools, it is making a difference in my life and affecting me holistically. Yes, there are very challenging days when I am not able to do anything.

The ultimate goal is to co-create a NEW normal by using the tools, receiving healthcare, coordinating with medical professionals, and blending eastern modalities with western practices. Sept. 2020

(Submitted by Alexis Stromquist, Whole Health Coach)

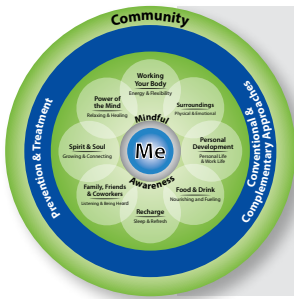
NEW! LIVE WHOLE HEALTH APP AVAILABLE NOW!

VA's new Live Whole Health app was designed to invite all Veterans to consider what matters most to them and then take the next step in personal health planning. The app has easy-to-use features that will help you stay on track and achieve your health and well-being goals. The app is available on both Android and Apple devices. Read the latest [Whole Health Feature Story](#) to learn more. The road to better health and well-being starts here. [Download](#) today!

Laurie Reisman, Whole Health Program Manager

Whole Health

Circle of Health



"You ought not to attempt to cure the eyes without the head, or the head without the body, so neither ought you attempt to cure the body without the soul... for the part can never be well unless the whole is well." Plato

FAMILY, FRIENDS AND COWORKERS: RELATIONSHIPS

Relationships matter to our health. Family and friends, the groups we are part of, fellow Veterans, and health care team members.

It takes just a minute to realize how relationships can affect our emotional, mental, and physical health. First, think back to a time when you had difficulty with a friend, family member, or significant other. How did you feel?

Now, think of a time when you felt supported, loved, and at ease. You may have been with a family member, a close friend, or perhaps a pet. The memory may include pleasant and comforting physical sensations.

Research explains when we feel lonely and isolated, the stress hormone cortisol increases. When we feel loved and supported, the hormone oxytocin increases. The brain also may trigger either the "fight or flight" stress response or the "rest and digest" relaxation response.

Loving and supportive relationships with others can have a protective effect on our bodies when we experience stress. The effect of stress is decreased when we experience love and connection with those we care about. Having close, loving, and supportive relationships can greatly improve our health and well-being.

Relationships matter to our health. Family and friends, the groups we are part of, fellow Veterans, and our health care team members — when it comes to Whole Health, many people can support us.

<https://www.va.gov/wholehealth/>

http://projects.hsl.wisc.edu/SERVICE/veteran-materials/RelationshipsandHealth_Final.pdf

NOT TOO BLESSED TO BE STRESSED?

Robin E. O'Hearn, Psychologist

Let's be honest: the holiday season is not what the magazine covers and Hallmark movies depict. For every photo of a perfectly roasted turkey presented on an immaculately set table, there are scores of lumpy gravies, mismatched plate settings, burnt pie crusts, and kitchens filled with pots and pans to wash. For every Hollywood kiss under the mistletoe, there are even more cantankerous uncles, sullen teenagers, fussy babies, and family members whose idea of helping is watching the game while others toil at creating the perfect day. You are not alone if you approach the holidays with some degree of anxiety. We put so much emphasis on perfection, harmony, and abundance at this time of year, so it's no surprise that we often feel pressure and stress. However, by cultivating awareness of our thoughts and emotions, we can reduce that stress and have more of the peace and gratitude we seek.

Cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT) is a widely used approach to help people manage a variety of psychological states such as anxiety and depression, as well as help them make positive changes in behaviors (eating better, sleeping better, etc). The "cognitive" piece of CBT refers to our thoughts; this includes the expectations we hold and how we interpret and give meaning to things that happen to and around us. Holding an expectation that all must be perfect implies that anything less is failure, and can rob us of the joy of the moment. It may be helpful to examine your expectations and adjust them to be less rigid and more realistic. For example, instead of thinking, "If my child doesn't get the latest iPhone, she will be miserable and I will feel guilty," try out "This is a tough year and the iPhone isn't in the budget; she may be disappointed and that is temporary and that's OK."

Learning to identify your triggers — those situations that result in us feeling upset, worried, or irritated — is also worthwhile. Aunt Karen always criticizes your use of Stove Top instead of from-scratch stuffing? Remind yourself that you cannot control others' behaviors but you can choose how you will respond. Rather than go on the defensive, for example, try a disarming compliment like "It would never hold a candle to yours! Maybe you can make it for our next gathering." You may also be able to identify triggers that lead to unhealthy behaviors. Planning ahead can help you cope! Sitting down to watch the games inevitably leads to having one too many drinks? Think of ways to

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break the pattern, such as volunteering to help prep or clean up, or plan to bring low- or no-alcohol drinks to sip.

Finally, give yourself a break, literally and figuratively! Start your day with 5 minutes of deep breathing or try one of the apps suggested in this newsletter. Get outdoors and walk, bike, or just listen to the birds.

Consider a 2-minute “gratitude break” when you find yourself getting overwhelmed. For 2 minutes, reflect on the many things (small and large) for which you are grateful. A shift in perspective can make a big difference. Want to learn more? Use this link for an easy-to-follow stress management guide:

https://www.prevention.va.gov/docs/NCP_ManageStreeWkBk_F_EditedJune102019.pdf



COMPLEMENTARY AND INTEGRATIVE HEALTH MODALITY TAI-CHI

The modality for this month is Tai Chi. Once again, we are discussing something that deals with Ch'i which is the flow of Intrinsic Energy. The Chinese call it Ch'i and the Japanese call it Ki. In Japan, it is the basis for higher Aikido and other martial arts. Tai Chi is a series of highly choreographed, lengthy, complex series of movements accompanied by breathing. The movements circulate the Ch'i and it is balanced as it flows. According to old Chinese teaching, when a person rests, the yin and the yang reunite and are stored in the bones. The action of Tai Chi consists of individual movement patterns that generate, circulate and harmonize internal energy flows. Tai Chi is a healing art. For healing benefits, Tai Chi needs to be practiced on a regular basis. It is of utmost importance that Tai Chi be practiced correctly in accordance with the principles of yin-yang, so that the results will be maximized. Tai Chi is best learned from a certified instructor who can make sure you are doing it correctly and that your body posture is correct. A certified teacher has undergone training and has a lot of experience. They also understand the complex principles involved. Tai Chi movements are done slowly without effort since tension will keep the Ch'i from flowing freely through the meridian channels. Tai Chi has been shown to improve health in many areas including: balance, fall risk, physical fitness and muscle strength, flexibility, quality of life, osteoarthritis, rheumatoid arthritis, blood pressure, cholesterol levels, promoting the ability to exercise in people with heart failure, osteoporosis (bone density), immune system health, quality of life in people with cancer, chronic pain, fibromyalgia symptoms, asthma, COPD including chronic bronchitis and emphysema. Research suggests that Tai Chi improves self-confidence, self-esteem and one's ability to

achieve their goals. The Whole Health areas that Tai Chi targets are: Personal Development, Food and Drink, Recharge, Family Friends and Coworkers, Spirit and Soul, and Power of the Mind.

Tai Chi can be adapted for people who are not able to do the regular Tai Chi movements. All of the Mindful Warrior facilitators in the VA clinics have been trained in wheelchair Tai Chi, which incorporates wheelchair movements. This is called adaptive Tai Chi. The Gainesville VA offers chair Tai Chi, which is especially useful for those that are unable to do standing Tai Chi. This is done virtually through telehealth by the recreational therapy department. Some Tai Chi classes are for specific health problems such as pain, PTSD, or arthritis. Staff can place a consult under Whole Health referrals, Mindful Warrior for any veteran who is interested in Tai Chi.

Along with the VA clinics that offer Tai Chi, classes are also available at community centers, health clubs, hospitals, park and recreation centers, etc. Make sure you look for a beginner or level 1 class and make sure your Primary Care Provider clears you to start Tai Chi. For more information, go to the following website:

<http://www.americantaichi.net/TaiChiQigongClass.asp> or <http://www.americantaichi.org/>

https://www.va.gov/WHOLEHEALTH/veteran-handouts/docs/IntroTaiChiQigong_Final508_07-25-2019.pdf

References: T'ai Chi Chih! by Jusin F. Stone;

VA website; "Introduction to Tai Chi and QiGong for Whole Health Veterans" handout by the patient centered care dept at the VA.

Deborah Lefler, Whole Health Coach

HERBS: SAGE

Sage is an herb from the mint family that has a sweet, yet savory flavor, which goes alongside oregano, lavender, rosemary, thyme, and basil. Botanically known as *Salvia officinalis*, it is native to the Mediterranean region. Sage has a long history of medicinal use for ailments ranging from mental disorders to gastrointestinal discomfort. Sage is high in vitamin K, which aids the body in clotting blood, and contains vital minerals like magnesium, zinc, and copper.



Sage can be eaten whole or ground. Adding sage to a dish is a great way to enhance flavor without adding extra calories or salt. It is the primary flavor in many breakfast sausages, and typically pairs well with poultry and pork. Sage is very popular in Thanksgiving dressing because it adds a savory and warm flavor. You can also use it as part of a rub on the outside of your turkey. If you have sweeter dishes, sage will compliment them well.

Cooking with herbs is a great way to add a small burst of nutrients and flavor to your food. Remember though, that good nutrition is not about focusing on any one food or nutrient above all others. It is about balance: consuming a variety of foods and getting a balance of all the different nutrients.

www.medicalnewstoday.com

www.herbaffair.com

(Important note: This is NOT professional medical advice. ALWAYS speak with your primary care provider and/or pharmacist before making any changes to your treatment plan, or considering a supplement natural or otherwise before taking.)

Patricia Granberry, Whole Health Coach

Healthy Living **HEALTHY LIVING MESSAGE: PREVENTION AND SELF CARE**

Many employees of NF/SG VHS have been detailed to work in other areas due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Two such employees are Jackie Morgan and Sonji Bennett, Whole Health Coaches who work in Gainesville. When personnel were needed to assist with giving flu shots to Veterans, they jumped to the challenge to assist.

Whole Health coaches do not generally provide clinical care. However, with their backgrounds as LPNs and their communication skills as coaches, they have been ideal. Becky Weber, HPDP Program manager and lab flu station coordinator noted “I could not have asked for better assistants!”

“Providing flu shots and education about immunization (preventative care) fits well with our “self-care” focus.” said Jackie. Sonji added, “Some of the patients are very anxious and we are able to provide tools such as deep breathing and relaxation to help them get through the experience”.



Becky Weber, Health Promotion & Disease Prevention Program Manager



Fruit Crisp

Prep: 10 in, Cook: 25 min, Total:35 min., Yield: 4 Servings. Serving Size: 1/2 cup.

Ingredients

2 cups of fruit
1 teaspoon lemon juice (fresh or frozen)
1/4 teaspoon cinnamon
1/3 teaspoon whole wheat flour
1 cup rolled old-fashioned oats
2 teaspoons wheat germ
2 teaspoons wheat bran
2 teaspoons Chia seeds
3 tablespoons flour
(preferably whole wheat)
A pinch of salt
3/4 teaspoon cinnamon
3 tablespoons brown sugar
3 tablespoons butter, melted

Directions

1. Preheat oven to 375F.
2. Roughly chop fruit and place in a greased small 1 quart glass Pyrex dish or ceramic or stainless steel baking dish that is oven safe.
3. Sprinkle fruit with lemon juice cinnamon and flour gently mix together until all the fruit is evenly coated.
4. Mix remaining ingredients together in a separate bowl this is the crisp topping.
5. Once mixed thoroughly gently spoon the crisp topping evenly over the fruit and press down gently with the back of the spoon to compact it slightly.
6. Bake for 25 minutes and let cool for about 10 minutes before serving.
7. Serve with a dollop of nonfat vanilla Greek yogurt, or whipped cream on top.

Recipe notes

- If you double this recipe, it fits nicely in an 8 x 8 glass baking dish pie pan.
- The topping is intend to remain crumbly and crisp, like streusel topping.

**Nutrition facts per serving: Calories: 180 | total fat: 10g | saturated fat 5.7g
Sodium: 108 mg | total carbohydrate: 21g | dietary fiber: 4g | protein: 3g.**

Submitted by Melania Susa, RD, LD/N
For more recipes, please visit www.nutrition.va.gov

Healthy Holiday Recipe Modification

The holiday season is here again! And even though our festivities may look a little different this year due to the ongoing pandemic, we are certain to still be indulging in some of our favorite holiday dishes. These special occasion foods should definitely be enjoyed guilt-free, but when the special occasion is actually a whole season that lasts for 1–2 months, it can start to put a bit of a strain on our healthy lifestyle, goals, and habits.

Many holiday recipes have a heavy list of ingredients, but they also tend to have some wiggle room you can take advantage of to reduce the amount of fat, sugar, and calories without sacrificing the taste or integrity of the dish. I recommend choosing 1 or 2 ingredients to tweak; this way it provides you some nutrients and still tastes just as good. The best of both worlds!

If the Recipe Calls for:	Try This Instead:
Whole milk	Skim, 1% milk, 2% milk, almond milk, soy milk, etc.
Cream	Whole milk or half & half
Butter, Margarine, Shortening	Reduce by 25% less than the recipe calls for; try half butter/half oil; maybe even cooking oil spray will do
Oil or Butter (in baked goods)	Applesauce; other fruit purees such as prunes or bananas
Cream Cheese	Light or ½ less fat cream cheese
Cheese	Reduced-fat cheese; try sharper variety and use 25% less
Mayonnaise or Sour Cream	Nonfat, plain Greek yogurt; low-fat sour cream
Sugar	Reduce by ⅓ of what the recipe calls for; swap for stevia
Ground Beef/Sausage	90/10 (or higher) ground beef; ground turkey/chicken
Ground meat (meatloaf/meatballs)	Replace 25% of meat with shredded zucchini/carrots
Bacon	Low-fat turkey bacon, lean ham, Canadian bacon
Regular Broth or Bouillon	"Unsalted" broth or bouillon
Bread crumbs/crushed crackers	Try crushed wheat bran cereal or ground oatmeal
Gravy/Soup	Chill, then skim off the fat that rises to the top
Salt	Use ¼ of the salt the recipe calls for and add more to taste



If you have questions about reducing a recipe or developing a holiday game plan, your PACT Dietitian and Healthy Teaching Kitchen Dietitian are ready to help! Just ask your primary care provider or Patient Aligned Care Team (PACT) for a referral. Happy Holidays!

Melanya Souza, RD, LD/N

NOW AVAILABLE: COUPLES COACH APP

This app (application) is by the National Center for PTSD's Dissemination & Training Division. All VA apps are available free to anyone. When you use a VA mobile app, no data that could be used to identify you is sent to VA or third parties. Any information that you enter into the app, such as names, phone numbers, addresses, images, or music, cannot be accessed, stored, or shared by VA.

The Couples Coach app was created for partners who want to improve their relationship and explore new ways to connect. It also includes relationship information specific to couples living with PTSD.

With Couples Coach you can:

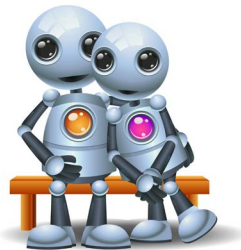
- Send notes and questions to your partner
- Work through relationship-building missions
- Use tools to help you address relationship challenges
- Track progress toward becoming a stronger, healthier couple



How to Use Couples Coach

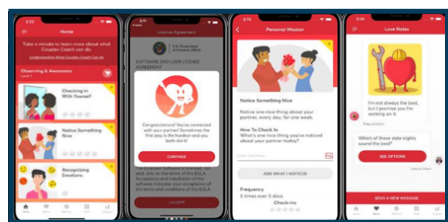
Couples Coach works best when partners use the app together, although you can use it alone. You choose missions—small commitments to improve your relationship—to work through yourself or with your partner. There are five levels of couples training with dozens of missions to choose from. Available skills to practice include:

- Observing feelings and behaviors
- Increasing positive interactions
- Increasing positive communication
- Working through conflict
- Connecting to your community



There are quizzes you can take, and you can share results with your partner if you'd like. You can also set reminders to check in regularly and mark favorite challenges and tools to return to quickly.

NOTE: Couples Coach is not intended to replace needed professional care related to marriage and family counseling, or mental health conditions, such as PTSD. The app features a locator for finding professional help.



<https://apps.apple.com/us/app/couples-coach/id1457019070>



https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?hl=en_US&id=gov.va.mobilehealth.ncptsd.couplescoach

Lisa Huang, Supervisory Librarian, NF/SG VHS Library

The **NFSGVHS Chaplain Service** would like you to know that VA Chaplains are available to you for spiritual and pastoral support. Our desire is to care for our Veterans, their families, and our staff members alike. We are here to listen and encourage, offer comfort and hope, provide prayer and emotional support, and promote a sense of peace. In the Gainesville and Lake City VA Medical Centers, you have 24/7 access to our Chapels for prayer, meditation or to simply sit in a quiet place. Our offices are located nearby if you would like to talk. Please feel free to call us or drop-in at your convenience. We have Chaplain availability at JOPC and also virtually at all other OPC's and CBOC's. We want you to know that we are here for you!

Email: VHANFL Chaplain Service

GV VAMC: 352-548-7427

LC VAMC: 386-755-3016 x392125

JOPC: 904-475-6381

Please feel free to contact us at your convenience!

Chaplain Melvin Lane

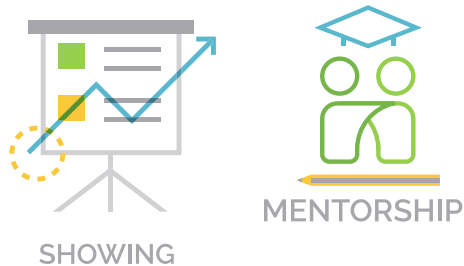
Peer Support Specialist Success Story:

My name is Wendy Skinner and I am a certified peer specialist. I would like to share with you briefly some of my lived experience which affords me the opportunity to be a peer specialist. I am a Veteran who has been diagnosed with PTSD and I used to abuse substances in order to cope with my symptoms.

Before coming into recovery, my experiences with medical professionals were intermittent visits to doctors when seeking relief from pain, not a solution, just medication. After beginning the recovery process, I sought care to identify any damage I may have caused as a result of not taking care of my health. Further into recovery, I then sought assistance from my primary care provider to help accomplish my goals, which were to lose weight and quit smoking. I received referrals to the specialty clinics, dieticians and groups to assist me in reaching my goals.

I have been clean now for 15 years and nicotine free for 10 years this month and I have lost 100 pounds. These accomplishments became possible with the assistance I received at the VA and it took over a 10-year span to accomplish. Additional assistance I received from fellow Veterans and a community 12-step support group. Not all Veterans have this opportunity to have the additional support they need with their goals until NOW! That is what whole health means to me! It is like a one-stop shop.

With Whole Health, all of the information that took me 10 years to obtain is provided at one time, so when a Veteran is ready to address something, the Veteran knows exactly how to accomplish this. I really love Whole Health principles and having family, friends, and co-workers who support me has saved my life. I am eternally grateful for the VA and their support in reaching my goals and I am glad we have a program that helps others to do the same.



Wendy Skinner, Certified Peer Support Specialist, Gainesville VAMC

Are You Able to Use a Wise Mind?

When navigating the challenges in your life, are you able to incorporate a wise mind to manage your thoughts, emotions, and behaviors? Or do you often feel that your emotions and impulses are in control and not you? For many Veterans, the coronavirus pandemic provides an opportunity to strengthen the ability to be mindful of thoughts and emotions so they may more effectively select behaviors that may reduce present and future suffering.

One type of therapy, Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT), presents three basic states of mind: reasonable mind, emotion mind, and wise mind. When you are in reasonable mind, you may feel detached from present events and notice an emphasis on the future based only on observable facts with limited emotional input. When operating from emotion mind, you may find your logical thinking is cloudy and you may engage in behaviors that are primarily driven by an intense emotional state.

Wise mind is the delicate balance between reasonable mind and emotion mind ... it is known as the “middle way” or the “middle path.” You may experience your wise mind in different ways. Like Jiminy Cricket in Pinocchio, it may be a still, small voice within that knows what is best. One way to strengthen your ability to recognize your wise mind is to focus on your breath. As you bring air into your lungs, gently say to yourself “wise.” As you exhale, say the word “mind.” The idea is to use your breath to find a place of peace and wisdom in managing thoughts, emotions, and behaviors.

Learning to select behaviors from a wise mind stance is a practice that takes time to develop. In the meantime, breathe and be patient with yourself and others.

Kimberly Spencer, LCSW Suicide Prevention Coordinator

Beating the Holiday Blues

You are an individual of immense strength and courage and it is time to seek that source of light again. It takes courage to ask for help, to change for the better, to forgive or to seek forgiveness. Maintaining or establishing relationships with family and friends or connecting with the community and even with pets can make a huge difference in your physical, mental, and emotional health and well-being.

The holidays, typically a time of joyfulness with family and friends, are upon us. During these festive times, one's senses are awakened with the hustling and bustling of shopping, the smell of cooking, and the sounds of holiday music. Yes, egg-beaters are twirling, spoons are tinkling around bowls, bells are jingling, and the air is filled with the aroma of incense, spices, and fresh-cut pine.



Unfortunately, for many, the holidays can bring a reminiscence of sad or unpleasant events which may result in grief, depression, anxiety or loneliness. Instead of being the “happiest season of all,” the season can result in one becoming overpowered with the “holiday blues.” Connecting with family and friends, the community or even with animals can surely help to overcome the holiday blues.

https://www.washingtondc.va.gov/features/Holiday_Blues.asp

Bhuaneshwari Seenauth RN, PACT Care Coordinator

**“What you leave behind is not what is
engraved in stone monuments, but
what is woven into the
lives of others.”**

Pericles



HER STORY

“

**Each person deserves a day away in which no
problems are confronted, no solutions searched
for. Each of us needs to withdraw from cares
which will not withdraw from us.**

Maya Angelou

poet, author and civil rights activist



practice gratitude

Gratitude

Gratitude is thankful appreciation for whatever we receive or experience. Brother David states: "It's not happiness that makes one grateful, but gratefulness that makes us happy."

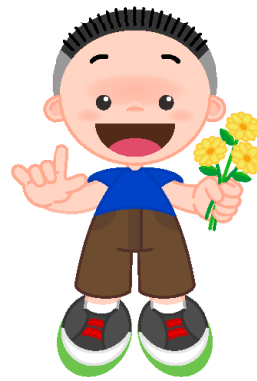
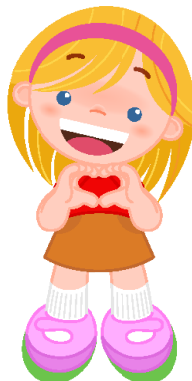
Research has found that people who practice gratitude meditation regularly have lower blood pressure, better immunity, and a generally improved mood.

One of the easiest ways to feel happier is to direct your attention to the good things in your life. Equally, shining a positive light on bad or neutral things changes how you feel about them. When you're caught in a cycle of despair you can easily step out of it by consciously calling to mind all that is positive and life-firming in the situation that is causing you frustration.

The purpose of the meditation is to cultivate an open and gentle feeling of thankfulness for all that is good in your life, for the gift of life itself. It focuses on gratitude as well as forgiveness, and it is a good option for people who are new to the idea of taking their first steps into trying the idea of doing guided meditation at home.

1. Settle yourself in a relaxed posture. Take a few deep, calming breaths to relax and center. Let your awareness move to your immediate environment: all the things you can smell, taste, touch, see, hear. Say to yourself: "For this, I am grateful."
2. Next, bring to mind those people in your life to whom you are close: your friends, family, partner. Say to yourself, "For this, I am grateful."
3. Next, turn your attention onto yourself: you are a unique individual, blessed with imagination, the ability to communicate, to learn from the past and plan for the future, to overcome any pain you may be experiencing. Say to yourself: "For this, I am grateful."
4. Finally, rest in the realization that life is a precious gift. That you have been born into a period of immense prosperity, that you have the gift of health, culture, and access to spiritual teachings. Say to yourself: "For this, I am grateful."

References: Brother David Steindl-Rast
James Gordon: The Transformation
Patricia Granberry, Whole Health Coach



Additional Resources:

If the holidays become too much, remember you are not alone and help is just a phone call away. If you or a Veteran you know is in crisis, please contact the Veterans Crisis Line **1-800-273-8255 Press 1** (24 hours a day 7 days a week).

Below are some excellent resources to not only help you through the holiday season, but do so with knowledge gained and Self-Care Mobile Apps to use whenever you wish:

- [Video: Whole Health Overview \(introduction to Whole Health\)](#)
- [Video: Power of the Mind](#)
- [Video: Family, Friends and Co-workers](#)
- [Handout: Relationships and Health](#)
- [Handout: Coping with Grief](#)
- [Handout: Compassion Practice](#)

The [Personal Health Inventory](#) walks you through the eight self-care areas identified on the Circle of Health to help you determine how they affect your health. Based on your answers, this self-assessment tool will help you pinpoint areas to work on. What matters to you will shape your plan and drive your choice of [Well-being Programs](#) and clinical treatments. <https://www.va.gov/WHOLEHEALTH/phi.asp>

The Clinical Contact Center is a service providing 24/7, telephone, virtual care and support to Veterans enrolled for VA Health Care in Florida, South Georgia, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands. You can call **1-877-741-3400** around the clock to get your health questions or concerns answered. Services include general administrative support, nurse advice and triage, and virtual visits with a doctor or nurse practitioner via telephone or VA Video Connect.

The National Call Center for Homeless Veterans (NCCHV) provides free, confidential support for Veterans and their family members and friends who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. Veterans can either call or chat online with the National Call Center for Homeless Veterans where trained counselors are ready to talk confidentially 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Dial **1 (877) 424-3838** or visit <https://www.va.gov/HOME-LESS/> to receive confidential support. This site also provides information for food.

Information if in need of food: [Food Pantries Throughout the US](#)

Information to help with sleep issues: [Path to Better Sleep](#): If you're experiencing sleep problems, you don't have to let it control your life. This course is designed to help you develop habits that promote a healthy pattern of sleep. <https://www.veterantraining.va.gov/insomnia/index.asp>

Self-Care Mobile Apps: Most of the apps feature education, self-assessment, skill development, personalized tools, multimedia demos, and links to support.

Prayer of St. Francis of Assisi

Lord, make me an instrument of your peace, Where there is hatred, let me sow love;
Where there is injury, pardon; Where there is doubt, faith; Where there is despair, hope;
Where there is darkness, light Where there is sadness, joy;

O Divine Master, grant that I might not so much seek to be consoled as console;
To be understood, as to understand; To be loved, as to love. For it is in giving that we receive.



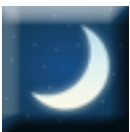
COVID Coach app is created for everyone, including Veterans and Service members, to support self-care and overall mental health during the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic



MINDFULNESS Coach app is designed to support independent mindfulness practice. The App also contains information about mindfulness and PTSD symptoms, increasing resilience and self-awareness, improving emotional balance, and building positive skills.



PTSD Coach app supports the self-management of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). The app may be used alone or in combination with the website PTSD Coach Online. If you do not have a smartphone, but have a computer and internet access, try PTSD Coach Online. The app can be used by anyone to support recovery.



INSOMNIA Coach app was created for everyone, including Veterans and Service members, to help manage insomnia. The app is based on Cognitive Behavioral Therapy for Insomnia (CBT-I).

www.ptsd.va.gov/appvid/mobile
<https://mobile.va.gov/>

Bhuaneshwari Seenauth RN, PACT Care Coordinator

VA Video Connect



Through this pandemic, the NF/SG VA has served over 50,000 unique Veterans with virtual visits. Many Veterans have expressed appreciation for having access to Whole Health services while being able to maintain physical distancing in a safe environment. Virtual care is offered through most of the providers and services at the VA!

“You’re like a gentle breeze that came and took the fog away.” Veteran to his Whole Health Coach

“I’ve found that the Veterans enjoy it because they are able to share their home life with me. Displaying some of their favorite things to do while home. One of the Veterans takes me for a walk through his garden, down to the river for meditation.” Whole Health Coach

“I am finding that the Veterans love this new way of having the visit and want to keep their visit via VA Video Connect after we go back to face-to-face visits. I offer a daily meditation practice during COVID 19 to the Veterans. It has been helping ... they are looking forward to this ... I walk in the backyard doing a meditation while the birds are singing and the breeze is blowing. The Veterans say that they can hear birds chirping and it is very peaceful.” Whole Health Coach

If you are a Veteran who is interested in trying out this modality, speak to your Whole Health Coaches and other providers about obtaining assistance to set it up. You may be surprised by the outcome!

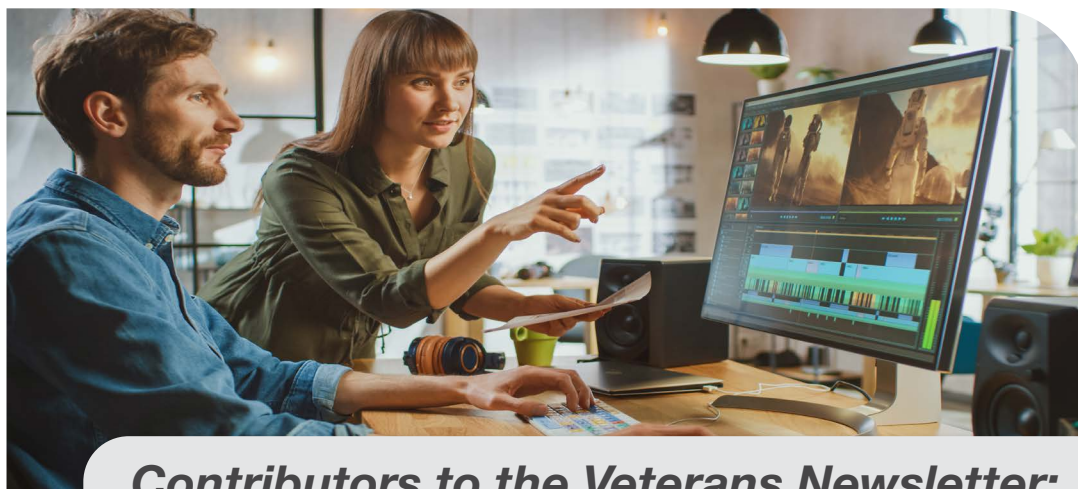
—Laurie Reisman, Whole Health Program Manager

CONTACTS AND WHOLE HEALTH WEBSITE

Whole Health Coaches can be reached through the main number of the Clinic or Hospital they work.

Whole Health Website: <https://www.va.gov/wholehealth/>

NF/SG WH Website: https://www.northflorida.va.gov/NORTHFLORIDA/services/Whole_Health.asp



Contributors to the Veterans Newsletter:

Laurie Reisman, Whole Health Program Manager, NF/SG: Message from the Program Manager, Prayer of St. Francis of Assisi, poem "Lost" by David Wagoner. NEW! Live Whole Health App Available Now! VA Video Connect.

Kimberly Spencer, LCSW Suicide Prevention Coordinator: Are You Able to Use a Wise Mind?

Chaplain Melvin Lane: Chaplain Services, North Florida/South Georgia Veterans Health System.

Alexis Stromquist, Whole Health Coach, Jacksonville Outpatient Clinic, Southpoint: Veteran's Success Story.

Wendy Skinner, Certified Peer Support Specialist, Primary Care Mental Health Integration(PCMH), Gainesville VA Medical Center: Peer Support Success Story

Robin E. O'Hearn, Psychologist/Health Behavior Coordinator, Jacksonville Outpatient Clinic, Southpoint: Not Too Blessed to Be Stressed?

Deborah Lefler, Whole Health Coach, The Villages Outpatient Clinic: Complementary and Integrative Modality: Tai Chi

Patricia Granberry, Whole Health Coach, Gainesville VA Medical Center: Family, Friends and Co-workers, Gratitude, Sage herb

Melanya Souza, RD, Healthy Teaching Kitchen Dietitian and National Co-Lead, Gainesville VA Medical Center: Fruit Crisp Recipe, Healthy Holiday Recipe Modification, Sage herb edit.

Becky Weber, RN Health Promotion Disease Prevention Manager, Gainesville VA Medical Center: Prevention and Self-Care.

Lisa Huang, Supervisory Librarian, NF/SG VHS Library: Couples' Coach App

Bhuaneshwari Seenauth, RN PACT Care Coordinator, Jacksonville Outpatient Clinic, University Blvd: Beating the Holiday Blues. Resources – Veteran's Crisis Line, Video: Whole Health Overview, Power of the Mind, Family, friends and co-workers. Handouts – Relationships and Health, Coping with Grief, Compassion Practice. Personal Health Inventory, Clinical contact Center, NCCHV, Path to Better Sleep, Food Pantries, Self-Care Mobile Apps.

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